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Support by the United Nations System of the Efforts of Governments to Promote and Consolidate New or Restored Democracies

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Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in compliance with General Assembly resolutions 54/36 of 29 November 1999 and 56/96 of 14 December 2001. In the latter resolution, the Assembly encouraged the Secretary-General to continue to improve the capacity of the Organization to respond effectively to the requests of Member States by providing coherent and adequate support for their efforts to achieve the goals of good governance and democratization. The report also provides an analytical overview of the assistance given by the United Nations system in recent years in the area of democracy and governance. Over the past decade, the United Nations has seen an increase in its support for new and restored democracies in Eastern Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia, many of which are countries emerging from civil war and conflict.

The report is also submitted pursuant to resolution 56/269 of 27 March 2002, in which the Assembly invited the Secretary-General, Member States, the relevant specialized agencies and bodies of the United Nations system, as well as other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, to support and collaborate in the holding of the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies. The Conference, which was held in Ulaanbaatar from 10 to 12 September 2003, adopted by consensus a final report, Declaration and Plan of Action that outlined benchmarks for democratic Government and committed participating Member States to implement comprehensive plans in this regard at the national, regional and international levels. The report concludes by recommending that the General Assembly support the actions proposed by the Fifth Conference of New or Restored Democracies.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolutions on new or restored democracies, starting with resolution 50/133 of 20 December 1995, the General Assembly has welcomed the reports of the Secretary-General on the ways in which the United Nations system could support the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies (A/50/332 and Corr.1, A/51/512, A/52/513, A/53/554 and Corr.1, A/54/492, A/55/489, A/55/520 and A/56/499). In its most recent resolution on the matter, resolution 56/96 of 14 December 2001, the Assembly encouraged me to continue to improve the capacity of the Organization to respond effectively to the requests of Member States by providing coherent and adequate support for their efforts to achieve the goals of good governance and democratization.

2. Moreover, the Assembly requested me to examine options for strengthening the support provided by the United Nations system for the efforts of Member States to consolidate democracy, including the designation of a focal point, and to submit a report to the Assembly at its fifty-eighth session on the implementation of the resolution. The present report is submitted in compliance with that request.

3. By its resolution 56/269 of 27 March 2002, the Assembly invited me, Member States, the relevant specialized agencies and bodies of the United Nations system, as well as other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, to support and collaborate in the holding of the Fifth International Conference of New and Restored Democracies. The present report starts with a description of the results of that Conference, which took place in Ulaanbaatar from 10 to 12 September 2003. It also provides an analytical description of the activities carried out by the United Nations system in recent years in the area of assistance to democracy and governance.

4. In my report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, on new and restored democracies (A/54/492), I recommended that the inventory of assistance given by the United Nations system to Governments to strengthen new and restored democracies — which was done every year from 1995 to 1998 — should be conducted every third or fourth year, or in years preceding the holding of future conferences of new or restored democracies. The Assembly endorsed that recommendation in its resolution 54/36 of 29 November 1999. The present report is submitted in compliance with that request as well. About 40 United Nations departments, offices, funds and programmes provided input for the survey presented in section III. The scope of United Nations assistance to the democratization efforts of Member States has markedly increased over the years and not all contributions could be used in that summary; all the inputs will, however, be used in the follow-up work to the present report.

II. Fifth International Conference of New and Restored Democracies on Democracy, Good Governance and Civil Society

5. A record number of States, 119, with over 400 participants, and some 30 of them at the ministerial or equivalent levels, participated in the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, which took place in Ulaanbaatar from 10 to 12 September 2003. The final report, Declaration and Plan of Action were

adopted by consensus. The Conference succeeded beyond expectations, which augurs well for the future of the movement.

6. An innovation in the Conference was a parallel Parliamentary Forum, organized jointly by the Parliament of Mongolia and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. One hundred twenty participants from 47 countries attended. A highly interactive civil society forum, with some 240 participants from 64 countries, preceded the Conference. Both forums presented their results to the Conference, suggested their inclusion in the future conferences and pledged to institute their own follow-up mechanisms to monitor progress.

7. Another innovation was to mix foreign ministers, other governmental representatives, parliamentarians and representatives of the United Nations system and civil society in the Conference debates. That new practice worked well, with constructive exchanges of views. Qatar made an official offer to host the next conference in Doha, which is the first time it would be held in an Arab country. It was decided, however, that the Follow-up Mechanism to the Fifth Conference, in New York, would make the final decision. The next Conference could also take place in Latin America if the traditional regional rotation is followed.

8. The wide and high-level participation in the Conference demonstrated that there is increasing global support to discuss and promote democratization — nationally, regionally and globally. Whereas the Declaration adopted at the Conference reconfirms much of the contents of previous Conference declarations, it also presents more clearly than ever before the benchmarks for a democratic society. More importantly, the Plan of Action is action-oriented and commits the participating Governments to implement ambitious plans at the national, regional and international levels, for instance, through drawing up national and regional plans for strengthening democracy.

Some of the main themes of the Conference

9. The following points of interest emerged from the debates of the Conference:

- Globalization and its impact on democracy was a major theme of the thematic discussions of the Conference; international terrorism and crime were other key themes. Concerns were expressed about the impact of structural adjustment policies on democracy and the fact that, increasingly, some democracies have limited fundamental freedoms in the name of anti-terrorism. While some saw new opportunities in globalization, the need for creating a proper regulatory framework to mitigate its negative impacts was also stressed
- Poverty, unemployment and social exclusions were seen as threats to democracy. There was a call for increased support from donors and international financial institutions to developing countries in order to support democracy and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals
- Many speakers noted the importance of a vibrant, active civil society and the necessity of government support to its varied elements. The interdependence of democracy, human rights and peace was also stressed
- The decline of trust in authorities, particularly in some older democracies, and drastic drops in party membership worldwide were new trends noticed which

should be closely monitored. Their impact on democracy, whether new or old, is still unknown

- Electoral systems were also discussed and "the winner takes all" policy, still often practised, was deemed to bring about tensions and risks for long-term political stability. In addition, the question was asked as to how to prevent politicians from becoming "democratic authoritarians" after elections, a fundamental problem in many countries
- The media were deemed to be an important watchdog for democratic practices, but trends in the concentration of ownership were noted; if those trends continue, it was suggested that they might have detrimental effects on democracy
- Unilateralism was also seen as a threat to democracy and it was asked whether a partnership between Governments, civil society and the United Nations could constitute a counterforce against any new unilateralist tendencies
- The Conference results should also be seen as a commitment to continuing processes of democratization by Governments, parliamentarians and civil society, which should be effectively monitored. That is the only way to achieve practical results before the next Conference, it was noted.

Observations on the results of the Conference

10. Although the conferences of new or restored democracies have so far been largely a meeting place to discuss and reflect on democracy rather than a place to decide on new policies and concrete actions, they have nevertheless succeeded in creating the elements needed for a normative framework for democratization gradually to emerge. It is no wonder that now, 15 years since the first Conference, there is serious talk to institutionalize their follow-up and start monitoring the progress achieved between the Conferences. The follow-up could, for instance, take place through country information notes and/or democracy indicators, which were both discussed in the Fifth Conference and mentioned in its Plan of Action.

11. Inclusiveness has been the main character of the new or restored democracies movement. The philosophy of exposing emerging democracies to peer pressure sets it apart from the "community of democracies", which tries to define an exclusive group of true democracies, a task many see as difficult or impossible to accomplish. The movement started with the aim of stressing the need of new or restored democracies to meet, learn from each other and determine jointly its future actions. Bringing the movement more under the United Nations umbrella, as some of the participants in the Ulaanbaatar Conference wished, might stress the inclusiveness of the Conference even more, but it might also bring about new consequences affecting the nature of the movement, which should be fully debated and reflected on.

III. Activities carried out by the United Nations system in the area of democratization and governance

12. Strengthening democracy around the world has been a recent priority of the United Nations system. I have, on my part, emphasized the need for the Organization to focus increasingly on the ways to promote better governance —

legitimate, democratic governance that allows each individual to flourish and each State to thrive. I also consider the promotion of democracy to be one of the main goals of the Organization for the twenty-first century. In fact, over the past decade, the United Nations has seen an increase in its support for new and restored democracies in Eastern Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia, many of which are countries emerging from civil war and conflict.

13. United Nations democracy assistance to new and restored democracies is multifaceted. It includes State and institutional reform, with specific emphasis on free and fair elections and respect for international law and human rights principles; the development of a vibrant civil society based on free speech and organization; and a political culture that encourages public debate and participation. Many activities and programmes focus on providing legal, technical and financial assistance and advice, monitoring and observation services, and civic education and training.

14. Since the 1998 report of the Secretary-General on new and restored democracies (A/53/544 and Corr.1), in which an inventory of democracy assistance was last taken, the Organization has also published a number of studies in that field and has held a multitude of conferences and workshops on democratization and good governance in various locations around the world. The virtues and, occasionally, drawbacks of democratization are thus widely debated in the United Nations system. Those important aspects of United Nations democracy assistance — research and policy formulation — are covered in the 2003 survey more thoroughly than in previous inventories.

A. Supporting and reforming the State and its institutions

15. One essential element of United Nations assistance to new and restored democracies is to help build and reform State institutions compatible with democracy. That includes providing technical assistance to strengthen legal institutions, including legal training and education for civil servants and establishing national institutions for the promotion of human rights. It also includes electoral assistance, through which the United Nations helps emerging democracies build professional institutional capacity to organize legitimate and transparent elections on their own. Over the past few years, the Organization has also put more resources into improving the transparency and accountability of State and government institutions.

Electoral assistance

16. Overall, the United Nations system has provided electoral assistance in a number of ways: organization and observation of elections; verification of election results; provision of technical assistance, such as budget organization, civic and voter education, and of information technology training for elections personnel.

17. In post-conflict situations, United Nations peace-building and peacekeeping missions are sometimes fully responsible for the conduct and organization of an electoral process, as was the case in Timor-Leste. Since 1999, nearly 3,000 United Nations Volunteers have helped the process of nation-building in Timor-Leste, developing local and central institutions, and some 100 Volunteers have been assigned with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo,

supporting the holding of municipal elections, among other assistance. Another example of electoral assistance in a peace-building setting is Sierra Leone. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) helped organize the National Consultative Conference in Sierra Leone, which paved the way for elections in May 2002 and was a major step towards lasting peace.

Enhancing the rule of law and accountable public administration

18. The United Nations is helping many new and restored democracies strengthen the capacity of their legislatures and ensure that they provide opportunities for fair and inclusive democratic participation.

19. Recognizing the importance of responsive, accessible and accountable public administration, the United Nations is a leading provider of technical advice on the modernization of State institutions. In Afghanistan, UNDP was the main actor responsible for meeting the Interim Authority's most immediate needs — contributions to a UNDP trust fund covered post-Taliban Afghanistan's first US$ 10 million payroll in December 2001. The United Nations currently helps build the capacity of the national Loya Jirga council, the police force, the civil service and the judicial commissions.

20. The United Nations also runs specific training programmes in post-conflict societies. In Kosovo, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) trains municipalities in the use of information and communications technologies and in Sierra Leone a programme is in place to teach negotiation skills. UNITAR will soon launch a rather broad training and capacity-building programme in Afghanistan. UNDP is also helping to establish the Kosovo Institute of Public Administration. In Timor-Leste, UNDP and the Inter-Parliamentary Union supported the Constituent Assembly by conducting an orientation programme for newly elected members and providing technical assistance to draft a new Constitution.

21. The United Nations supports independent, impartial and effective judiciaries and non-judicial institutions. In Mongolia and Thailand, its assistance has supported administrative courts as a way to increase accountability and access to citizens, while in Ecuador, poor women can now take their complaints of domestic violence to court and in Guatemala, mobile courts bring the justice system to the rural poor. In Mozambique, UNDP has focused on anticorruption, establishing a national forum for transparency and accountability in the public sector, including the Government, the public and the media.

Human rights protection and promotion

22. Many of the activities carried out by the United Nations in the area of State reform in new and restored democracies focus on human rights protection and promotion. The Organization is actively involved in efforts to promote human security and has been instrumental in creating national protection systems in many countries. Facilitating national reconciliation and building institutions in countries emerging from conflict have also been a priority for the United Nations. Especially in post-conflict societies, strengthening human rights is seen as one way to help prevent the recurrence of conflict and ensure that conditions for a lasting democratic process are put in place.

23. The United Nations helps new and restored democracies assess their laws and legal systems to determine whether they are in conformity with internationally recognized human rights standards of equality, non-discrimination and the participation of all people. In Bosnia, a UNDP-funded project represented the first-ever attempt to integrate human rights analyses into local development planning at the policy-making and implementation level. A project in Azerbaijan to support the development of the Ombudsman Office contributed to increasing human rights protection and oversight as well as increasing the effectiveness of the Parliament to perform its legislative and oversight functions.

24. In Guatemala, nearly 100 international and national United Nations Volunteers have been the mainstay of the United Nations Verification Mission (MINUGUA). Parallel to that, Volunteers have been engaged in initiatives designed to support the peace process by helping to build the capacity of local and national organizations to conduct training and raise awareness in addressing human rights issues, especially related to women's rights. In Haiti, the UNDP governance programme supports the reform of the justice and penitentiary systems at both the local and central levels.

25. Other United Nations technical cooperation support for new and restored democracies includes: national human rights plans of action (focusing on electoral democracy and participation in the conduct of public affairs); human rights education, which is a tool for teaching and disseminating democratic values; and support to the establishment and strengthening of democratic institutions such as national human rights institutions. In Rwanda, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is involved in efforts to strengthen the national human rights capacities, including developing the capacity of the National Human Rights Commission to define, implement and monitor a strategic plan and to enhance the Commission's understanding of human rights principles. Activities in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia include: formal human rights education in primary and secondary schools; developing the capacity of human rights civil society organizations; and supporting the Office of the Ombudsman. In Afghanistan, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is advising the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan on how to support transitional justice processes.

26. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees supports the adoption of refugee and asylum legislation, which is an important indicator in terms of achieving respect for internationally recognized human rights in new and restored democracies. The Office helped promote the adoption of amnesty laws, excluding perpetrators of war crimes against humanity, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which led to the peaceful resolution of the 2001 conflict that threatened to destabilize the southern Balkans.

Peace-building and peacekeeping

27. Over the past few years, attention has also been given to democracy as a key component of United Nations peace missions. United Nations peacekeeping operations contribute to providing a secure environment and creating conditions for political stability, democratization and good governance. The emergence of multidimensional missions with significant civilian components (e.g. political, civil affairs, civilian police, electoral, human rights) has further enhanced that role. Examples of current peacekeeping operations, the United Nations Mission of

Support in East Timor, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone are cases in point.

28. An increasingly important part of the field work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the area of the rule of law and democracy is in assisting in the design of the human rights components in the United Nations peace operations and providing advice once they are formed. That has entailed cooperative arrangements with the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the Secretariat, in Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic and Tajikistan, among others. The MONUC operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo provides a recent example of a peacekeeping mission where transitional justice work is being carried out by the human rights component of the peacekeeping mission. Those efforts are aimed at restoring the rule of law and ensuring that democratic processes and institutions are incorporated in United Nations peace efforts.

Improving accountability, transparency and quality of governance

29. The Organization's efforts to strengthen and reform government and State institutions in new and restored democracies also focus on improving the accountability and transparency of those institutions.

30. Since 1996, the World Bank has mainstreamed governance and anti-corruption work within its operational work and policy dialogue, and the Bank assists many new and restored democracies to build governance capacity through training, research, diagnostic tools and knowledge management. Recent examples of anti-corruption projects in new and restored democracies include support for tax reform in Colombia, Latvia and Venezuela; judicial reform in Slovakia; regulatory reform in the Russian Federation and the Ukraine; administrative and civil service reform in Tanzania and Yemen; broad governance reforms in Latvia and Cambodia; and public expenditure and financial management reforms in Burkina Faso, Ghana and Malawi. In addition, the United Nations has conducted country-specific analyses — including corruption surveys, expenditure tracking surveys and public officials surveys — in Albania, Argentina, Indonesia, Nicaragua and Uganda, among many others.

31. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has developed a number of standards and codes to encourage member countries, including new and restored democracies, to improve transparency and accountability. Those standards and codes cover Government, the financial and corporate sector, monetary and financial policy and the control, accounting, reporting and auditing systems of central banks. IMF is also intensifying its involvement in international efforts to combat money-laundering and the financing of terrorism.

B. Development of participation, civil society and democratic political culture

32. While building and reforming State institutions in new and restored democracies are crucial to the development of credible democratic Government,

none of the new State institutions will work effectively unless a strong and vibrant civil society is next to them.

Decentralization, local governance and popular participation

33. Within the area of decentralization and local governance, the United Nations works to increase access to public services for the poor and to nurture a democratic culture at the local level.

34. The United Nations helps design and implement national strategies for decentralization authority and responsibility, with an emphasis on the rights of women and the poor. For example, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, UNDP is supporting the implementation of the decentralization process agreed upon in the August 2001 Framework Peace Agreement, increasing local skills for delivering municipal services, including water and sanitation, and to improve transparency and accountability in local governance.

35. The United Nations has also been supporting numerous decentralization programmes, for example, in Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Mozambique and Rwanda. It supports decentralization processes that promote participatory local governance, social mobilization and the empowerment of communities. Last year was the fourth and final year of operation for the implementation of the UNDP Decentralization Programme in pilot areas of Kyrgyzstan. The project demonstrated the key role of community-based organizations in promoting democratic governance. The United Nations supported microcredit schemes and an effective participatory process as well.

36. Trade unions, with their focus on social dialogue, workers' protection and solidarity, represent an important segment of civil society that serves to strengthen the democratic process. Their constituents see social dialogue, including collective bargaining and labour dispute settlement, as a prerequisite for good governance and democratic development and an indispensable element of democratic participation in decision-making at all levels. A fundamental feature of the mandates of the International Labour Organization (ILO) relates to the stabilizing effect of its labour standards and their influence in establishing national labour laws and protecting workers' rights. Some of the new or restored democracies that have benefited from ILO assistance since 1998 include Bosnia and Herzegovina, Timor-Leste and Indonesia. Large-scale assistance has also been given to a number of southern African countries. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper process also offers ILO the opportunity to promote participation through social dialogue and tripartism and it has undertaken such work in Ethiopia and Sri Lanka, among other countries.

37. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UN-Habitat) supports local governance initiatives in new and restored democracies through its two campaigns, Urban Governance and Secure Tenure, and through a number of global programmes directed at civil society organizations. It prepares policy guidelines and tools on elements of land use, flexible tenure types and affordable land management. Advice has been provided through technical cooperation projects in the Stability Pact Countries and in Mozambique, Angola and Rwanda. Work in new and restored democracies emerging from conflict includes research, technical advice, capacity-building and networking activities regarding land, housing and property rights.

38. The United Nations also addresses the development and strengthening of training activities for municipal staff, elected officials and representatives of non-governmental and community-based organizations in human settlements management and local leadership. UN-Habitat recently held a workshop in Romania on "Regional Training of Trainers for Central and Eastern Europe".

39. Among new initiatives and important proposals in Africa are urban rehabilitation projects in Rwanda, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A number of local governance projects are under way in Asia and the Pacific and considerable attention and staff resources have gone into assistance to Afghanistan, where UN-Habitat provides major support to communities affected by the civil war. There are also many United Nations projects focusing on local governance in countries with economies in transition: the Russian Federation, Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro. There is a pilot project on innovations in local governance and decentralization in East Africa and a project entitled "Local-to-Local and Local-to-Global: Grassroots Women's Initiatives towards Good Urban Governance".

40. In Guatemala, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights helps strengthen the institutional capacity of key non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the country. It is paying particular attention to providing advice to the Ombudsman's Office and to developing local capacities to protect and promote human rights within civil society groups (human rights/indigenous/church organizations).

41. The United Nations Office at Geneva actively supports and fully participates in the work of the IRENE programme (Informal Regional Network of Non-Governmental Organizations with Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council, NGO Section/Department of Economic and Social Affairs), which was launched in Tunisia to cover many new and restored democracies in Africa (January 2002) and in Bulgaria for the Eastern European countries (May 2003). The programme aspires to reinforce the capacity-building and the participation of NGOs in democratic processes, at both the national and regional levels.

Promotion of free and independent media

42. The United Nations also supports the development of free and independent media in new and restored democracies. It helps train media personnel, emphasizing independence, ethics and media responsibilities in democratic societies, including support for women. For instance, in Indonesia, UNDP applied lessons learned from parliamentary reforms in other countries, in helping establish a Media Centre inside the National Assembly. The Media Centre provides the general public prompt and ready access to parliamentary proceedings and decisions and has created a community of journalists specializing in parliamentary affairs.

Encouraging a democratic political culture

43. Perhaps the least tangible but most important of the Organization's future efforts to support new and restored democracies is the development of a democratic political culture rooted in the country's own history and traditions. That is an area where it is difficult for outsiders to play a role, but where important work can nevertheless be done. The United Nations is still in the process of identifying how best to create viable programmes in that area. Many of the activities described in

previous sections already contribute to creating a democratic political culture. The next section analyses, among other things, how research and policy can make a special contribution in that context.

C. Research, policy development and implementation of norms and standards

44. Having been involved in assisting new and restored democracies over the years, it is crucial now for the United Nations to begin to learn from those experiences and develop its practices to conduct research in order to assess whether the assistance provided is still relevant. New and restored democracies have a lot to learn from each other and old and established democracies can and should learn from newer ones. It would also be important to strengthen the linkages among the United Nations programmes, agencies and departments in order to arrive at a coherent policy approach.

45. However, there are limitations to the assistance the United Nations provides to transitional democracies. In recent years the Organization has carried out a number of studies and projects and published books that analyse the challenges it faces. Some examine the key issues determining the success and failure of sustainable democratization in various regions. One question asked is whether the United Nations can help build the foundations of democracy, whether as an "external actor" it can have a substantive positive impact upon the development of democratic governance inside countries.

46. One important development in that regard was the creation by the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1998 of the International Panel on Democracy and Development, chaired by the former Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Its principal mission is to advise the Director-General on how to carry out and initiate programmes of the Organization relevant to the construction of democracy.

Interaction between democracy and human rights

47. Some United Nations studies have looked at the promotion of democracy in relation to international law and international norms. They consider the interdependence between democracy and human rights and stress that true democracy can only be achieved when international human rights standards are respected. Studies have also looked at the ethnic structure, inequality and governance of the public sector in new and restored democracies and the incompatibility between democracy and racism.

48. At the request of the Commission on Human Rights, contained in its resolution 2001/41 on the continuing dialogue on measures to promote and consolidate democracy, on 25 and 26 November 2002, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights organized an expert seminar to examine the interdependence between democracy and human rights. The seminar concluded, inter alia, that democracy and human rights are interdependent and inseparable, that the concept of democracy must be holistic and that success should be measured by the degree to which democracy succeeds in realizing human rights principles, norms and standards. The results of the seminar were submitted to the Commission on

Human Rights at its fifty-ninth session and a Democracy and Human Rights section was created on the Office's web site.

49. The Commission on Human Rights has requested the Office, in cooperation with UNDP, to organize a seminar in 2004 on good governance practices for the promotion of human rights (resolution 2002/76). The Office and UNDP are currently developing a methodology for the collection of such practices with a view to using it as a background paper for the seminar and to publish it for a wider audience.

50. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights also continues to deepen its work on the incompatibility between democracy and racism. The Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-ninth session requested the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance to update and expand the study on the issue of political platforms which promote or incite racial discrimination.

51. The project entitled Ethnic Structure, Inequality and Governance of the Public Sector of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) has a linkage to developing democratic practices, as it examines the complex ways ethnic cleavages and inequalities influence behaviour and institutions for governing the public sectors of multi-ethnic societies. It addresses issues of diversity, representation and cohesion in the constitution and management of the public sector. Research is being concluded in a number of transitional countries, including Bosnia, Kenya, Latvia, Lithuania and Papua New Guinea. An international conference, scheduled to be held in Riga from 1 to 3 December 2003, is being planned, together with UNDP, to discuss the research findings and policy implications of the project.

Democracy, economic development, peace-building and globalization

52. Other United Nations studies examine the challenges of democracy in the process of globalization and the constraints on policy-making that new democracies face as they become further integrated into the world economy. UNRISD has documented such experiences in a number of transitional countries, including Argentina, Benin, Chile, the Czech Republic, Hungary, India and Malawi. In collaboration with the International Social Science Council, UNESCO launched the International Summer School project to enable young researchers to share accumulated experience through lectures and seminars. Likewise, the E-Governance Capacity-Building Project aims at promoting the use of information and communication technologies tools in municipalities to enhance good governance.

53. Among the studies that focus on democracy assistance to countries emerging from conflict, the examples of Namibia, Cambodia, Kosovo, Timor-Leste and Afghanistan can be mentioned. Some studies examine the crafting of Security Council mandates relating to peace-building and democratic assistance and elections in post-conflict societies. UNITAR is conducting the so-called Singapore Conference Series on Briefing and Debriefing of Peacekeeping Operations. It also recently issued a book on Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Japan, the Republic of Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Timor-Leste and Afghanistan. In January 2003 the United Nations hosted and co-chaired the first joint United Nations-Democratic Control of Armed Forces seminar on "Security Sector Reform", which focused on conflict prevention and political stability through the establishment and consolidation of democratic institutions in transitional societies.

Democracy and gender

54. Several studies also focus on gender issues and democratization. For example, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) has carried out research in two new and restored democracies, namely South Africa and Romania, on the processes through which gender issues have entered the political agenda in those countries. The case studies document and analyse the interplay between the State, civil society and the international community in their particular socio-economic, political and cultural contexts and examines the extent to which diverse policy processes take women's gender equality issues into consideration and affect gender-sensitive policies and programmes. The case studies have been published by INSTRAW in a book entitled "Engendering the Political Agenda: The Role of the State, Women's Organizations and the International Community".

55. In 2001 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, UN-Habitat and the International Union of Local Authorities launched two publications on the role of women in urban governance. UNRISD research has also been conducted on the theme of gender justice, development and rights. One of the major thematic components included in that effort involved an analysis of democratization and the politics of gender, with case studies on the Islamic Republic of Iran, Peru, South Africa and Uganda. UNRISD is presently embarking on the preparation of a major policy report for Beijing+10. The report will include four main thematic components, one of which will focus on governance, democratization and civil society from a gender perspective.

Democracy and regional perspectives

56. Much of the Organization's work on democracy in Africa focuses on good governance: conceptualizing good governance, establishing criteria for measuring and monitoring good governance, identifying ways and means to create and sustain Africa's ownership. The Economic Commission for Africa is a primary partner in support of the governance agenda of the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development and has been tasked with the responsibility to develop guidelines on economic and corporate governance in Africa and the African Peer Review Mechanism.

57. The African Governance Report will be launched at the African Development Forum IV, to be held in Addis Ababa in March 2004. The theme of the Forums will be "Governance for a Progressing Africa". The African Governance Report is intended to give a global picture of the performance of African States in the realm of good governance and identify "best practices" and governance capacity gaps in the public and private sectors and civil society. The United Nations also published an African concept paper in September 2002, highlighting key governance concerns and capacity gaps on the continent.

58. The United Nations University also recently published a book entitled "Democratization in the Middle East: Experience, Struggles, Challenges", which shows that the States of the region have yet to reach a level of democratization that would guarantee a path towards sustainable and plural democracy as well as liberal societies and economies.

IV. Recommendations and concluding observations

59. The survey in the previous section of the democratic assistance given by the United Nations system to new or restored democracies demonstrates well the widening scope of the Organization's involvement in promoting democratization. The Ulaanbaatar Conference of New or Restored Democracies, held from 10 to 12 2003, has also given us new momentum to pursue the Organization's emerging democratization agenda. The Conference set up an ambitious follow-up plan to implement its recommendations at the national, regional and international levels. The Follow-up Mechanism, convening in New York and originally established to follow-up the recommendations of the Bucharest Conference in 1997, would assume a key role in its future work.

60. The present arrangement through which UNDP gives the substantive and logistical support for each Conference through its Resident Coordinator, the country team of the host country concerned and the regional bureau at Headquarters, and the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat provides both continuity — institutional memory — and support for the Follow-up Mechanism and the General Assembly deliberations could be maintained on an interim basis. However, if the Conference is to be more institutionalized, a new support structure will be needed.

61. The Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, in its Plan of Action, recommended that the General Assembly support the following in promoting and supporting democracy at the international level:

Strengthen the Follow-up Mechanism by ensuring that:

- It is responsible for the follow-up of the implementation of the Plan of Action
- The President of the Bureau represents the International Conference at international forums when deemed necessary
- The President of the Fifth International Conference establishes, with the assistance of the United Nations, a working group to examine the conclusions of the Fifth Conference and proposals made in background papers submitted to and interventions made at the Fifth Conference with the aim of studying proposals for making the Conference even more effective and efficient and establishing a practical programme of work for future conferences
- It coordinates with the International Civil Society Forum follow-up mechanism
- The President or the Bureau are urged to initiate discussions with the Chair of the Community of Democracies to exchange views on ways of bringing closer the two movements, in a complementary manner.

62. **I suggest that the General Assembly, at its current session, give support for the above recommendation of the Fifth International Conference.** The previous Conferences have been instrumental in elaborating principles and goals in promoting and consolidating democracy, nationally, regionally and internationally. But the follow-up action has not been as effective as it should be and it needs substantive and logistical strengthening. I note with interest that the institutionalizing of the Conference has also been proposed and the Working Group to be set up by the President of the Fifth Conference will evidently study the modalities and options for its establishment. I look forward to the guidance of the General Assembly and future Conferences on those important questions.

63. Concerning the democracy assistance the United Nations system is providing to new or restored democracies, there is still much more to be done to make the work of the United Nations more integrated and effective. **The Organization needs to improve the focus and coherence of its activities in democratization.** As an external actor, it is still trying to identify what role to play and how best to support efforts that bring about sustainable democracy in the shorter as well as longer term.

64. Recent experiences in a number of countries have shown that democratic processes are fragile and can suffer setbacks leading to war. Although democratic Government differs from country to country, a more coherent approach to democratization is certainly needed, one which requires a global dialogue on common challenges and practices of governance in the twenty-first century. **International cooperation also needs to be strengthened, along with the tools to carry out the work in that field.**

65. Nevertheless, I am very pleased that irrespective of various conflicting views we have recently encountered in promoting democracy, the very concept of advocating and consolidating democracy has remained strong and viable. Democracy is promoted, for instance, by technical assistance provided by the international community; through the dialogue of all actors involved; and by giving good examples of vibrant democracies in difficult economic and social situations. A vigorous dialogue is needed and problems need to be addressed openly. Although there may be serious differences about methods and modalities, and we should not deny that fact, the ultimate goal of democratization has been shared by all of us.

66. The Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies has recently made an important contribution by showing that democracy remains an inspiring concept for all of us. **I am more convinced than ever that we have to remain on course in promoting democracy — globally, regionally and nationally. A full debate on the role of the United Nations in that vital undertaking in the twenty-first century would be a very desirable goal.** I look forward therefore to the General Assembly's contribution to that key challenge of the Organization in the years and decades to come.